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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
BANGLADESH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE'S CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM
GRADUATION CEREMONY
INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY OF BANGLADESH, DHAKA
AUGUST 17, 2013**

Professor Omar Rahman, Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh

Rashed Chowdhury, Chairman, Board of Trustees, IUB

Professors, organizers and so many others who made this program possible

... and most especially, you, the students who chose to spend your summer learning one of the world's great languages: Bangla

Asalaam 'malaikum and good afternoon

I used to work in a lumberyard ... that's how I paid my way through college.

Every summer, I worked with lumber, nails, screws, hammers and drills, paint ... it was good work ... it was so rewarding ... to this day I love building, except now as America's Ambassador to Bangladesh, I am no longer building houses, barns and sheds ... I am building relationships.

For the past eight weeks you have been working in a lumberyard, too.

Instead of hammers, drills, nails and boards, your lumberyard has been filled with different tools ... tools more powerful than any of those I ever worked with in the lumberyard of my youth ... you worked with the most powerful tools of all ... language ... the tools of communication, of connectivity, of engagement, of relationship, of partnership.

Whether a beginning student, an intermediate student or an advanced student, you have spent these past weeks creating, honing, sharpening the tools of Bangla, one of the great languages of the world.

In choosing to add Bangla to your tool chest, you have chosen well. You have chosen a language that enables you connect directly with the wonderful Bangladeshi people, who are the most energetic, dynamic, creative, generous, entrepreneurial, resilient people I know ... some of

the finest people on this good earth. What a wonderful tool you have created to foster and deepen ties with the great Bangladeshi people.

Bangla will also serve as a great tool for you professionally as it will enable you to link with the world's seventh largest country, third largest Muslim-majority country, a country of deep strategic importance to America.

In this troubled region of the world, Bangladesh is a moderate, secular, tolerant alternative to violent extremism, and this matters greatly to America.

As Bangladesh deepens its relationships with its neighbors, most especially India and Myanmar, it brings greater stability to the region, and this matters to America.

As the largest contributor of forces to international peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh fosters global peace and security, and this matters to America.

With the seventh largest population in the world, Bangladesh is vital to achieving global food security as the world's population heads toward 9 billion, and this matters to America.

This listing of vital American interests in Bangladesh goes on, but I think I have made my point: Bangladesh matters greatly to America ... and you, with your newly sharpened tools of the Bangla language are now well positioned ... whether through government service, civil society, academia, business ... to foster and bolster the relationship between America and Bangladesh ... to the benefit of the people of both countries.

A tool, no matter how great and powerful, is only a tool, a means to an end. A hammer lying on a shelf is naught but a chunk of inert metal attached to a piece of wood; boards stacked away forever in a lumberyard warehouse are naught but dried parts of a tree waiting to rot and return to the soil from which they came.

And so it is with language ... underused or unused, it simply fades away.

But I know that that is not your intention nor your destiny. I know that you will take your emerging and developing Bangla language skills and put them to good work ... good work ... good work building bridges, great bridges, bridges of understanding and partnership between America and Bangladesh. Each of your bridges will be unique ... some might be a bit odd looking ... but each can be an effective channel for building relationships, for fostering partnership, for deepening mutual understanding, for exchanging knowledge, views, ideas, beliefs.

Imagine this ... 14 new, exciting bridges between America and Bangladesh ... bridges that over the years can become bigger as you add more lanes and expand the traffic that flows over them.

What a legacy!

... and it all began with an 8 week language study in Bangladesh.

You have, indeed, chosen well in deciding to spend your summer in Dhaka.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery.*